

§ 953.5

shall become the final Agency decision if a timely appeal is not taken.

[59 FR 31538, June 20, 1994, as amended at 71 FR 53972, Sept. 13, 2006]

§ 953.5 Hearings.

(a) In general, admissibility of evidence at hearings conducted under this part hinges on relevancy and materiality. However, relevant evidence may be excluded if its probative value is substantially outweighed by the danger of unfair prejudice, or by considerations of undue delay, or by needless presentation of cumulative evidence. Testimony shall be given under oath or affirmation, and witnesses are subject to cross-examination. Stipulations of fact are encouraged and may be received in evidence.

(b) Objections to the admission or exclusion of evidence shall be in short form, stating the grounds of objections relied upon. The transcript shall not include argument or debate thereon except as ordered by the presiding officer. Rulings on such objections shall be a part of the transcript.

(c) Formal exceptions to the rulings of the presiding officer made during the course of the hearing are unnecessary. For all purposes for which an exception otherwise would be taken, it is sufficient that a party, when the ruling of the presiding officer is made or sought, makes known the action he desires the presiding officer to take or his objection to an action taken, and his grounds therefor.

§ 953.6 Compromise and informal dispositions.

Either party may request the other to consider informal disposition of any question of mailability, and the scheduled hearing date may be postponed by the presiding officer for such period of time as may be necessary to accommodate settlement discussions between the parties.

§ 953.7 Default; Appearances.

If a timely reply to the appeal is not filed, the presiding officer shall refer the appeal to the Judicial Officer, who may find that the General Counsel or the Chief Postal Inspector or his or her designee is in default. Whenever the General Counsel or the Chief Postal In-

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spector or his or her designee has been deemed to be in default, the Judicial Officer shall take whatever action on the appeal he deems appropriate. If an oral evidentiary hearing is to be held, the appellant may appear at the hearing in person or by counsel. If either party fails to appear at the hearing, the presiding officer shall receive the evidence of the party appearing and render a decision.

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§ 953.8 Location of hearing.

Unless otherwise ordered by the presiding officer, the hearing shall be held at 2101 Wilson Boulevard, Suite 600, Arlington, VA 22201–3078, on the date set in the notice.

[63 FR 66050, Dec. 1, 1998]

§ 953.9 Change of place of hearing.

(a) Not later than the date fixed for the filing of the reply, a party may file a motion that the scheduled hearing be held at a place other than that designated in the notice. The motion shall include a supporting statement outlining:

(1) The evidence to be offered in such place;

(2) The names and addresses of the witnesses who will testify; and

(3) The reasons why such evidence cannot be presented in Arlington, VA.

(b) In ruling on the motion, the presiding officer shall consider the convenience and necessity of the parties and the relevancy of the evidence to be offered.

[59 FR 31538, June 20, 1994, as amended at 63 FR 66050, Dec. 1, 1998]

§ 953.10 Presiding officers.

The presiding officer at any hearing shall be an Administrative Law Judge qualified in accordance with law (5 U.S.C. 3105) and assigned by the Judicial Officer (39 U.S.C. 204), or the Judicial Officer, may at his discretion, elect to preside at the reception of evidence. The Judicial Officer shall assign cases to Administrative Law Judges upon rotation if practicable.